



# Kentucky Child Fatality Review Newsletter

Volume I

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## Coroner's Corner

**Below is a blank copy of the most up-to-date coroner child fatality reporting form. Please print off a supply of copies for yourself and your deputies. Please discard old forms. You are reminded that by law, coroners and deputy coroners are to submit a copy of the completed coroner child fatality reporting form for each coroner or deputy investigated child death. The Department for Public Health will accept these forms if submitted by the 10th of the month after the death is certified.**



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## Notes from Amy

It is important that we not forget the main purpose of Child Fatality Review (CFR); prevention. The death of a child is not just unfortunate, but deeply sad and, as we see from our data, preventable much of the time. Every child death deserves its due review. We cannot let the process stop there. We must form multidisciplinary teams that bring many different areas of expertise, and we must discuss the circumstances of the child from when they were alive, to the 911 call, to when they are buried. We need to look at what actually caused this death, make sure the cause of death and manner of death are accurate and then look to see what we can do to make sure another child doesn't have to die that way. Even if it's a rare death for your area, even if you think it would do no good to review and discuss the case. Everything you do at the local level is to be reported up to the state level. It is with your data that we are able to find trends across the state. It is your hard work that will pay off for the children across the state of Kentucky when we are able to group your data with data from other local teams. That one "uncommon" death for you may actually not be so uncommon when we look at the big picture.

Currently there are 70 counties with active local CFR teams and another 19 counties that have formed CFR teams but are not meeting on a regular basis. That leaves 31 counties that have not yet formed a CFR team. Each county is highly encouraged and challenged to organize a functioning local CFR team. The State CFR Program Coordinator is available to help you develop your team. Additionally, you are encouraged to work with surrounding coroners that have successful CFR teams. If you are not aware of a functioning CFR team near you please contact the State CFR Program Coordinator to learn of a coroner in your area you may work with.

## News you can use: Helping others cope with their loss

While the holidays are usually filled with love, laughter, and cheer, for someone who has lost a child it may be a time of difficulty, heartache and grief. As your role of coroner or grief counselor brings you to work with this group of people remind them that the holiday doesn't have to be perfect; it is expected that they may not attend every holiday function, it's expected that some traditions may not be carried out as normal. Perhaps most importantly, let them know it's okay to feel that way; that it's normal to be sad and it's okay to grieve. Encourage them to not be neglectful of the own physical and mental health, and to avoid the over-use of alcoholic beverages.

Grief counseling services are mandated to be offered to every family that loses an infant due to SIDS (KRS 213.161) and are suggested to every family that loses a child (birth through 17 years) regardless of the cause of death.

## Information to share with your community: Safe Sleep during the Holidays



The holidays are among us! Many will be traveling to visit friends and family or will be the host to holiday guests. There's much to remember when traveling with your baby. You can leave the swing, rocker, diaper genie, etc. at home, but be mindful of where your baby will sleep and of child passenger safety if you are flying and not taking a car seat with you; how will you get around town at grandma and grandpa's if they don't have a car seat for Junior?

Never assume the folks you're staying with know what to expect—even if they've raised kids of their own. (And if they don't have children, of course, they may be especially in the dark.) First, ask where you'll be sleeping. If you'll be sleeping on the fold-out, work with your host to find a solution—be it a portable crib in the office or a pack-n-play in the walk-in closet. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning parents and other adults this holiday season not to place an infant to sleep on an air mattress. The CPSC wants to be sure that people are aware of the risks associated with air mattresses and babies. Air mattresses are commonly used in travel-type conditions associated with the holidays. A baby placed on an air mattress to sleep could suffocate, causing death to the infant. This can occur for various reasons, due to the softness of an air mattress, along with soft bedding and other issue, an air mattress (or other soft sleeping area) is not safe for an infant. Always bring along a safe sleeping area for your baby when you travel. Portable play yards are suitable for this, provided they meet safety guidelines for sleeping. The CPSC reports 16 tragic deaths having occurred due to air mattresses since 2002. Most of these occurred in infants less than 8 months of age. Eleven of those children suffocated from being in a face down position on the air mattress. 5 of them died from being trapped in between bed slats and an air mattress or between a nearby piece of furniture or wall and an air mattress. The CPSC warns that air mattresses should be used only for adults and older children. Even if an air mattress is inflated properly, it is still usually too soft for an infant to keep their airway clear. Under-inflating an air mattress or leaks in the air mattress are also problems.

If your travel takes you to a hotel or motel, chances are there will not be a crib available. And unfortunately when cribs are available they tend to be old (some predating safety regulations) and structurally unsafe, and others come with bedding—such as folded full-sized sheets—that could present a hazard to your sleeping child. It's best to bring your own portacrib or play yard, as long as it meets safety standards. (The modern play yard is a combination of an old-fashioned play pen and a portable crib. It's safe for sleeping, often has a removable bassinet for the youngest of babies, and folds compactly to fit in the trunk of your car.)

Last, but not least, it may be a good idea to bring a gate (or two) to fence baby in, or to fence off stairways and other no-babies-allowed zones.

Keeping these tips in mind will help your holiday travels be less stressful, and will allow for everyone to sleep soundly and SAFELY.

Happy Holidays to you all!

For more information on general safe sleep practices you may direct parents to the following Web site:

<http://www.healthychildcare.org/pdf/SIDSparentsafesleep.pdf>



## County Team Highlight

Want to see your local county Child Fatality Review team mentioned here? If you know of a local CFR team that is doing an exceptionally good job with their reviews, prevention strategies, community involvement, or any other component of their CFR responsibilities, please send an email to the State CFR Program Coordinator. Include in the email a brief summary of the team and their good doings, along with your name and contact information.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

<http://www.chfs.ky.gov/dph/mch/cfhi/childfatality.htm>

[www.childdeathreview.org](http://www.childdeathreview.org)

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

[www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)

[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

[www.cpsc.org](http://www.cpsc.org)

[www.pcaky.org](http://www.pcaky.org)

[www.kentuckysuicideprevention.org](http://www.kentuckysuicideprevention.org)

## Ask Amy

**Question:** Is there a reference book or handbook available to local teams for guidance of both starting a team and duties of carrying out a team?

**Answer:** Yes! Both the state and local teams should follow the recommendations of the Program Manual for Child Death Review, from the National Center for Child Death Review. You may access and download this manual on the web at <http://www.childdeathreview.org/Finalversionprotocolmanual.pdf>; copies may also be obtained by contacting the State CFR Program Coordinator.

Please send suggestions or articles that you would like to see included in the newsletter. We welcome the chance to highlight your activities, overviews of your program, local team achievements, projects that have come from local reviews, etc.

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